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Ukraine in the Context of New European Migrations

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Like other Soviet successor states, the Ukraine is faced by multiple international migration-related dilemmas and opportunities. However, apocalyptic predictions forecasting mass emigration appear unwarranted. The future character of Ukrainian emigration policies is discernible in the category of those who travel for “personal reasons,” most of whom are tourists. Many tourists are looking for work abroad. Business trips constitute a second class of often concealed labor force movement. The ecological effects of the Chernobyl disaster also will be a long-term factor affecting Ukrainian emigration.

Migratory movements out from the state entities, formerly consolidated within the USSR, have been entering a qualitatively new stage following fundamental changes in their social, economic and political structures and radical reform of emigration law. Ethnic and political emigration as the major forms of migration in the period of Cold War and intersystem confrontation (only the former was recognized and allowed officially) would be likely to coexist, or even would be gradually making way for migration, motivated primarily by socioeconomic reasons.

Understandably, it is not the changing composition of the migration flow, but the rapidly growing number of “Soviet” emigrants that troubles most politicians, analysts and the general public in the West, as well as Eastern Europe.

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR (this agency is in charge of regulating em/immigration), 452,000 people left this country in 1990, seeking permanent residence abroad. The corresponding figure for 1988 and 1989 (combined) was 344,000. Two of the most populous republics—Russia and Ukraine—had the greatest number of emigres: Russia with 103,600, and Ukraine with 95,300. The figure for Ukraine was two times the number of emigrants from the republic in 1989, five times that in 1988, and fifteen times the number in 1987.¹ Taking into consideration that

¹ These figures, in fact, reflect only the number of exit permits, while the actual number of

the population of Russia is more than three times the population of Ukraine, it is quite evident that Ukraine's role in "maintaining" the flow of migrants is disproportionately great (21%). Although, in terms of intensity of emigration (number of emigrants per 1,000 population) Ukraine ranks only fifth (1.4) among other republics, with Moldova (3.9), Kazakhstan (3.1) and Kirghizia (2.7) having the lead.

Despite the high rate of increase of Soviet emigration since the mid-1980s and apocalyptical forecasts, predicting up to 20 million migrants, the author tends to give a negative answer to the crucial question of whether the current level of emigration would be much exceeded. The figure for Ukraine is likely to be approximately 100,000 persons plus those engaged in temporary forms of employment abroad, which can embrace as many people as "classical" emigration.

This estimate seems to run contrary, also, to the results of a number of opinion polls. The most comprehensive of them, representative of the entire Ukraine, was carried out in November, 1990. It revealed that 44.5 percent of the respondents expressed their readiness to work abroad, while 10.5 percent were ready to leave the country forever. In Kiev and the Transcarpathian region, this figure was twice as high. As compared with results of a similar survey in the beginning of 1990, the number of persons wishing to work abroad increased by 10.2 percentage points, and the number of potential emigrants grew by 3.7 percentage points.

Evident public acceptance of the idea of emigration or, at least, temporary employment abroad, nevertheless, would hardly "spark" an emigration explosion even in view of the considerable migration potential existing in Ukraine. This "paradox" can be explained by a variety of factors, the first of which is easily deducible from the analysis of the composition of contemporary "Soviet" emigration—Ukrainian emigration being a part of it.

Because family reunification remains practically the only officially recognized and allowed ground for seeking permanent residence abroad, migration out of the Soviet Union has had, since the 1960s, almost exclusively an ethnic character. Jews, ethnic Germans, Greeks and Armenians make up the great bulk of Soviet emigration: this accounts for the fact that in 1990, 60 percent of Soviet emigrants headed for Israel, 31.3 percent for Germany, 5.3 percent for Greece and 2.9 percent for the United States. The breakdown of Ukrainian emigration is approximately the same: 93 percent of exit permissions were issued for emigrants to Israel, 3 percent to the United States and 1.5 percent to Germany and Hungary.

emigrants, based on the calculations made by scholars from the Moscow Institute for Socioeconomic Studies of Population, might be about two times smaller.

TABLE 1
POPULATION OF UKRAINE BY NATIONALITY^a

Nationality	Total Persons	Percent Change Over 1979
Total	51,452,034	3.7
Ukrainians	37,419,053	2.5
Russians	11,355,582	8.4
Jews	486,326	-23.1
Byelorussians	440,045	8.4
Moldavians	324,525	10.5
Bulgarians	233,800	-1.9
Poles	219,179	-15.1
Hungarians	163,111	-0.8
Romanians	134,825	10.7
Greeks	98,524	-5.3
Tatars	86,875	3.5
Armenians	54,200	40.2
Gypsies	47,917	39.2
Crymean Tatars	46,807	705.3
Germans	37,849	10.9
Azerbaijanians	36,961	Not available
Gagauz	31,967	8.7

Source: State Committee for Statistics of the USSR, *Bulletin of Statistics*, 1990, 10:76-79.

Note: ^a For nationalities numbering not less than 30,000 people.

Ethnic minorities represent a visible segment of the Ukrainian population (5.4%) (*see*, Table 1). Thus, their presence has secured to Ukraine a prominent role in Soviet emigration as long as the process of family reunification continues (here must be added a certain number of ethnic Ukrainians themselves, who have emigrated to the United States, Canada, Australia and other countries of the Ukrainian diaspora). It is very doubtful, however, that this tendency will prevail in the future, since family reunification, in this author's view, is not likely to remain as important a factor in shaping migration flows.

In order to substantiate this assumption, it would be useful to draw a technical distinction within an umbrella notion of "ethnic emigration"—according to the motives of departure—between family reunification per se

and emigration of ethnic minorities due to aggravation of interethnic tensions. In the former case one could not but note dwindling absolute and relative numbers of ethnic groups who have traditionally "supplied" the largest cohorts of migrants² and measures to cut or limit chain migration which have been taken or at least are being considered by many receiving countries.

Far more intricate is the problem of emigration motivated by existing or growing interethnic contradictions. Surely, there is no way to play down the importance of this factor, as empirical data show that ethnic stereotyping and prejudices, including antisemitism, still exist in Ukrainian society, especially on the grass-roots level.³ At the same time there is ample evidence that the current state of ethnic relations in Ukraine cannot be perceived as the major determinant of either external or interrepublican migrations.

The real situation in the field is well documented by the result of public opinion polls, which were taken on the eve of the Ukrainian referendum on independence. Only 9.3 percent of the respondents supported the idea that the gaining of independence by Ukraine would lead to the violation of minorities' rights, while 55.48 percent rejected this statement. Slightly over half of the respondents were sure of independent Ukraine's ability to ensure free development of ethnic languages and cultures, while 9.53 percent gave a negative answer (Ossovsky, 1991:10). In spite of the special sensitivity of Ukrainian-Russian relations now, not more than 27.08 percent of ethnic Russians in Kiev claim to have ever been a victim of discrimination. Finally, 71.7 percent of ethnic Russians, 71.0 percent of Jews and 81.4 percent of representatives of other ethnic groups expressed their firm intention to vote for an independent Ukrainian state (Zalizniak and Mudruk, 1991:2).

Extremely significant for harmonizing interethnic relations has been the adoption by the Ukrainian parliament of the special "Declaration of the Rights of the Nationalities of Ukraine," which proclaims and guarantees their equality in all spheres of social, economic, political and cultural life, including free use of native languages and preservation of the traditional areas of ethnic settlement (*The Voice of Ukraine*, November 2, 1991:2). Another major piece of legislation is the law "On Citizenship in Ukraine." Ukrainian law-makers approved "zero-option," granting the right of citizenship to all persons residing in Ukraine at the moment of the act's coming into force (*The Voice of Ukraine*, November 13, 1991:12-13).

² For instance, between the last two censuses of population, the number of Jews, Greeks and Hungarians in Ukraine has decreased by 23.1%; 5.3% and 0.8% correspondingly.

³ One sociological study indicated an alarming 35% mark of incidences of antisemitism, as cited by respondents (Kaminski, 1990:21), another places the figure at 37.5% (Bebyk, 1991:2).

Acknowledgment of the relative diminution of the significance of ethnic factors inevitably entails the necessity to evaluate other components which form Ukraine's emigration potential, the deepening socioeconomic crisis being the most important.

Almost all Ukrainian economists predict that transition to the market economy will cause a production decline of 15–20 percent (Kucherenko, 1991:12). According to the forecast, prepared by the Institute of Economy of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, the number of those dismissed from work will total 745,000 persons in 1991 and 1,187,000 persons in 1992. That will make up respectively 2 and 4 percent of the total Ukrainian labor force as of 1990. According to other, even more alarming prognostications, the number of released "working hands" will reach the level of 1.6 to 1.8 million, including 300,000 to 400,000 of "pure" unemployed; *i.e.*, those who will be entitled to unemployment benefits (Vasilchenko, 1991:3).

Workers, especially unskilled ones, will be affected by unemployment more than other categories of the labor force. They will make up 67 percent of the total number of dismissed in 1991 and 72 percent in 1992.

Measures for providing employment will cover only 74.6 percent (1991) and 73.7 percent (1992) of the total number of unemployed. Sixty-six percent of them in 1991 and 65.5 percent in 1992 will be employed in the national economy and at social works. The situation is further complicated by unpreparedness of existing employment services to manage labor resources under new socioeconomic conditions.

The age cohort which is certain to be the most severely hit by economic transformations comprises people under 30 years of age, the most mobile component of the population.

Data, collected during a cross-republican study of the younger generation of Ukraine (1990), persuasively show that in the course of the last five years living conditions for this critically important segment of the population deteriorated. As many as 70 percent of the respondents gave a definitely negative answer to the question of whether they fared better than before. Almost all were dissatisfied with their material status and employment opportunities. Judging from initial free market experience of former socialist countries, we can assume that this tendency would persist. Even now, young workers and professionals are the first to be fired during different reorganizations and staff reductions. Fifty-five percent of the respondents consider the threat of unemployment as real. Under these circumstances, emigration is perceived as a kind of social survival strategy by a large number of the younger citizens of Ukraine.

In answer to the question, "What is your attitude to the possibility to work and live in foreign countries?" 15 percent of the respondents would like to

obtain work and permanent residence abroad, 33 percent would like to obtain long-term (more than 3 years) employment abroad, 21 percent would like to go abroad to find temporary work or obtain an education, 13 percent would not go abroad either for permanent residence or temporary employment, but would like to work in a joint venture at home, and 18 percent would neither emigrate nor seek employment with foreign firms. So, 69 percent of the respondents are ready to emigrate or to work under short or long-term contracts (Nebozhenko, 1990:25, 62–65).

“Push” factors, such as the deterioration of living conditions and social instability, would certainly “press” masses of emigrants out of Ukrainian territory if international migration were a “one-way” street, which it is certainly not. Desire of an individual to emigrate is eventually limited by the readiness of the country of destination to accept him or her. In this respect, “hopefuls” from the former Soviet Union are surely at the gates of a highly selective “club.” Immigration laws, existing now in industrial nations of Europe and North America, strictly limit entry of immigrants other than close relatives of their citizens or permanent residents, highly skilled workers and professionals, scientists and members of the intellectual elite. It can be assumed that a certain amount of Ukrainian immigrants would try to get into “desired” countries, even if their applications for immigrant visas are rejected, and settle down illegally. The most vulnerable in this respect will be bordering states, which can become the countries of first settlement—a kind of “transit station” for Ukrainian migrants en route to Western Europe, North America and even Australia, which are still the most coveted migration targets. As to the projected numbers of illegal immigrants, even in the case of a large-scale migratory movement of this type, any estimates, judging from international experience, more often than not turn out to be sheer guesswork.

In view of serious precautions being taken by neighboring states, visa overstaying looks like the most viable strategy for Soviet illegals. The other prospective source of Ukrainian and Soviet emigration en masse might be represented by temporary, especially seasonal, employment of professionals and workers whose labor would be “supercheap” for their employers. For the latter reason the growing presence of the new breed of *ostarbeiter*s in menial, unskilled jobs cannot be totally excluded, although this category will not determine the make-up of the future “labor” emigration from Ukraine. It would be, rather, shaped by highly qualified persons with fair chances to fit the pattern of the Western labor market.

According to predicted changes in types of migration, the structure of emigration is almost certain to change essentially as well. In 1990, 30 percent of Soviet emigrants were blue-collar workers, 35 percent were in

white-collar occupations and professions, 30 percent were pensioners and dependents. Except for the inevitable decline of the pensioners' ratio, it is now too early to determine the exact correlation between different occupational categories of prospective emigrants, but recent sociological studies show that the desire to leave this country is relatively stronger for scientists, managers and professionals in the field of production and maintenance, persons of "free professions," those in white-collar occupations and skilled workers.

An idea of the future character of Ukrainian emigration can be derived from the analysis of the following two categories of contemporary migrants. The first is represented by those who travel for "personal reasons." In the first half of 1991 alone, the number of exit permits issued to them reached 1,350,000. The majority, 822,000, were going to Poland, 85,000 to Yugoslavia, and 58,000 to Turkey and Czechoslovakia. The bulk of this category of migrants is made up of "commercial tourists" engaged in trading and other business operations abroad who cross the frontier repeatedly under the guise of "personal reasons," quite often utilizing false invitations from foreign citizens, still necessary to get entrance visas and exit permits. It can be assumed also that this group conceals a good deal of job-searching migrants: according to some estimates, migrants looking for jobs abroad make up about half the travelers for "personal reasons."

"Business trips" constitute another channel of concealed working force movement. The number of Ukrainian citizens going abroad "on business" totaled 102,020 in 1990 (two and a half times more than in 1989, six times greater than in 1988, and fifteen times more than in 1987). This spectacular increase is due not only to the development of cooperation with foreign partners but also to the subsequent rise in the number of agents of these contacts. Sending their employees on long-term business missions and as professional trainees, Ukrainian enterprises quite often play the role of intermediaries for foreign firms willing to employ Ukrainian professionals and skilled workers.

Assessing Ukraine's potential as a source of emigration, one should bear in mind the Chernobyl disaster. Its ominous presence and hardly predictable consequences have already started the exodus of internal "ecological refugees."

Regretfully, it looks now like the plans for the liquidation of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, approved at the governmental level, will hardly be carried out in the foreseeable future due to the collapse of the Soviet economy and disintegration of the USSR itself, which aggravated the already existing deficit of financial and material resources and the problem of employment. Today, the number of people still living in radioactive-con-

taminated areas of Ukraine is officially estimated at 256,000, but some independent experts give a much higher figure—up to 8 to 10 million persons residing in contaminated areas of Ukraine, Byelorussia and Russia (Umerenkov and Umnov, 1991:5).

Inefficiency of government-organized ecological transplantation of people accompanied by widely spread radiophobia have stimulated spontaneous ecological migration. Uncontrolled exodus from polluted areas could not be stopped even by the still-existing system of internal visas or registration (*propyska*) which was recognized to be unconstitutional in October 1991, but which had been valid during the period after the Chernobyl disaster. This system, combined with the virtual absence of housing, impeded the free choice of residence for ecological refugees.

The problem of ecological migration is not limited to the refugees from the territories polluted with radionuclids. There are too many overpolluted areas (not yet declared to be zones of ecological disaster) in Ukraine, which occupy only 3 percent of the territory of the USSR, but which provide almost a quarter of the aggregate national product. Producing 44 percent of the steel, 52 percent of the cast iron and 75 percent of all the electrical energy, Ukrainian industry simultaneously throws 10 million tons of wastes into the air and 2.5 million tons of sewage into the rivers (Serdiuk, 1991:9–13).

The Chernobyl accident laid its imprint not only on internal migration, but also on the emigration processes. The danger of living on the polluted lands has been a powerful push factor for representatives of those ethnic groups who have had the opportunity to emigrate during the post-Chernobyl period. It can be perceived as a simple coincidence, but in Kiev in the second half of 1986, the number of applications for exit visas from Jews leaving for Israel was reportedly several times greater as compared to the same period of 1985.⁴ A plausible scenario is that, with the enactment of the new emigration law, the number of applications from the polluted areas will exceed the average for Ukraine. Given the possible deterioration of the environment in the affected areas, potential receiving countries (especially those with a high concentration of ethnic Ukrainians) could be left with no choice but to liberalize their entry policies regarding this group of immigrants.

The essential characteristic of the current stage of Ukrainian emigration is being determined by the emerging new political order, independent republics having become main actors within the space of the former USSR.

⁴ Ethnic minorities who live on the polluted lands could be granted the status of ecological refugees only by the receiving country, as happened with Czechoslovakia which has already evacuated several hundred Czech families from the contaminated areas of the Ukrainian province of Volyn.

This fact deeply affects the whole set of problems pertaining to emigration.

Understandable euphoria, accompanying the process of ethnic revival and gaining independence, can and probably would serve as a forceful deterrent to emigration. Physical and moral resources of many potential migrants are now allured by ideas of state-building and the molding of a new national identity. Nonetheless, even these developments cannot in the long run offset the influence of the socioeconomic push factors for emigration.

A special question is the position of the Ukrainian official circles regarding emigration. On the legislative level, the problem of emigration was dealt with for the first time in the Ukrainian law "On the Employment of Population" adopted on March 1, 1991 (*The Voice of Ukraine*, March, 1991(22):4-6). Article 10 of the Law recognized the right of Ukrainian citizens to perform professional activities during their stay abroad. It is envisaged that their legitimate interests would be defended by special agreements between Ukraine and other states. Conclusion of such agreements with Ukraine's neighboring countries (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary) can be expected in the near future. Establishment of cooperation in this field is facilitated by geographical proximity of these countries, their traditional interaction and already existing experience of border migration, etc.

Drafting of the Ukrainian comprehensive migration legislation is now under way. Corresponding instructions were given by the Ukrainian Parliament to the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Labor. The new law should be unconditionally based on the principle of priority of human rights, as well as it should be devoid of deficiencies present in the "All-Union" law. Apart from outmigration, it would have to tackle a problem created by the disintegration of the former USSR—the problem of intensified migration between former Union republics. Due to relatively high living standards, Ukraine has always been an attraction for migrants from other parts of the Union. In-migration largely accounts for the fact that between the last two censuses of population (1979 and 1989) the number of ethnic Russians and Byelorussians in Ukraine increased by 8.4 percent, Moldavians increased by 10.6 percent, while the number of ethnic Ukrainians increased only by 2.4 percent. It is quite safe to presume that with the worsening of the economic and political situations in other regions, migration flows into Ukraine, where the situation seems to be more stable, would grow. Unregulated influx of people (according to official estimates the number of internal refugees in the USSR totaled 676,000 in June 1991; unofficial figures run as high as 1–1.5 million persons) can seriously aggravate social,

economic and ethnic tensions. This problem is thus to become the object of interrepublican regulation on the governmental level.

In view of the growing salience of migration problems—both of external and internal natures—special divisions within the Ministry of Labour and the Republican Centre on Employment have been recently established.

In addition to state organizations, a certain number of commercial firms entered the field, trying, for instance, to recruit Ukrainian workers for some countries of Eastern Europe. However, efficiency of these firms is quite low. Some, in fact, have no real possibility to provide advertised services. Moreover, a certain number of them infringe the law, so 20 out of 30 private organizations dealing with recruitment for work abroad were closed. It is quite evident that such activities by nongovernmental organizations are to be subjected to strict public control.

Politically, fostering emigration looks unpatriotic in this period of Ukrainian history. Besides, departure of every 100,000 emigrants is, allegedly, equivalent to the loss of 4.8–5.2 billion rubles in national income. On the other hand, inevitable growth of unemployment, possible hard currency remittances (according to some calculations, they can total—for the former Soviet Union as a whole—up to 15–20 billion dollars annually) and modern expertise that future migrants might be bringing back home could serve as an incentive for encouraging emigration. The most probable outcome of the interaction of these two tendencies could be *laissez-faire* official policies. However, it seems also reasonable to expect that Ukrainian state bodies would work out a set of concrete arrangements, aimed at creating conditions favoring the eventual return of migrants (ensuring the right to bring in property and to transfer money from abroad—combined with guarantees of their uninhibited use—promoting cultural and other ties of emigrants with Ukraine).

In any case, public policy on migration should embrace not only regulation of exit and entry to Ukraine, but it should also envisage the complex of state measures, concerning all phases of the migration cycle. One of its most important elements would be the creation of an institutional infrastructure, catering to migrants both within the country (organized recruitment, dissemination of reliable information about living and working conditions in the country of destination, etc.) and abroad within the framework of Ukrainian diplomatic consular missions. It is clear that the effectiveness of such activities could be substantially enhanced if Ukraine enters the international systems of regulation of labor migrations, including participation in the International Organization for Migration, and joins relevant UN and ILO documents in the field.

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